MARVEL
CONAN THE KING
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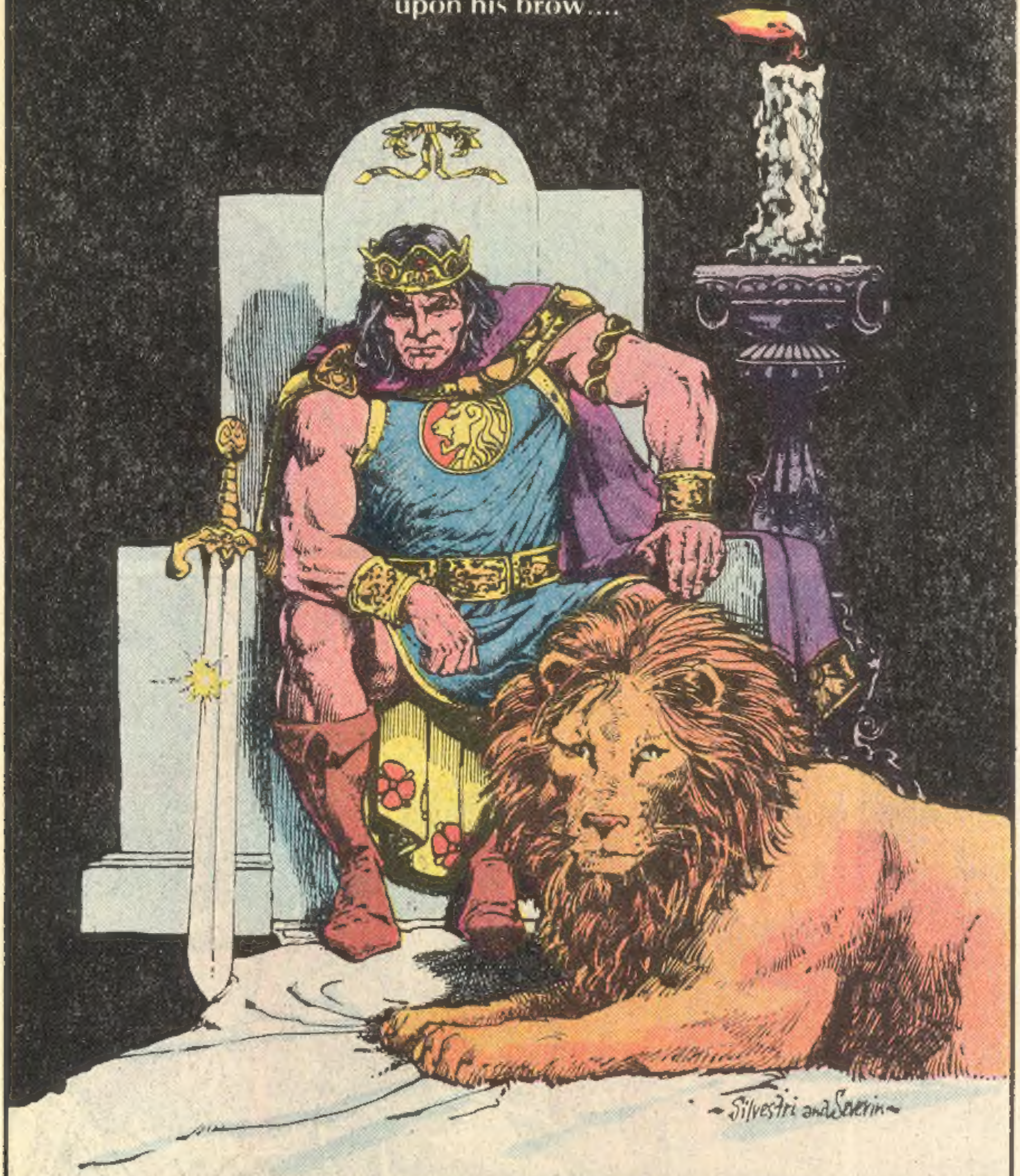
20
JAN
THE PRINCE IS DEAD

Know ye, O Prince, that Conan of barbarous Cimmeria did wander a lawless adventurer across Hyboria's golden lands and glittering seas 'til Fate did yield him proud Aquilonia as kingdom of his own, a beauteous wife and children fair. Yet somber sat the barbarian on civilization's throne, ever uneasy the crown upon his brow....



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EASTERN GUNDERLAND, NORTHERN PROVINCE OF AQUILONIA...

SO THAT'S PRINCE CONN? A TALL DEVIL FOR HIS AGE--

THE MORE LANKY A CORPSE HE'LL MAKE!

OUR ORDERS ARE EVERY LAST ONE OF THESE AQUILONIANS DIES.

WE AWAIT ONLY THE SORCEROUS SIGNAL TO JOIN SWORDS TO BLACK MAGIC--

--AND THEN WE BUTCHER THIS HERD OF CALVES.

HO, BREAK OUT THE HONEY WINE...

...OUR PRINCE'S THROAT MUST BE *DRY* AS THE SANDS OF *KHARAMUN*.

TRUE ENOUGH, CAPTAIN *LYSIAS*. THIS SPEECHMAKING AND DIPLOMACY'S A *PARCHING* BUSINESS.

STILL, I'M PROUD MY FATHER'S ENTRUSTED *ME* WITH THE TASK OF RECRUITING FRESH INFANTRY FROM AMONG THE *GUNDERMEN*.

IT SEEMS BUT YESTERDAY HE'D *TAN* MY HIDE IF I TROTTED *FOUR PACES* FROM HIS SIGHT.

HA! METHINKS THE YOUNG PRINCE IS ENJOYING HIS FREEDOM.

IT CAN'T *HURT* THE LAD ANY. HE'S TOO *PAMPERED* IN THE *COURT* IF YOU ASK ME.

WHAT'S AILING YE BROOMTAILS?

WHNNNEEE

HNNIIII

MY LIEGE, MARK THE SKIES-- THEY TURN BLACK AS THE PIT!

'TIS UNNATURAL.

WHAT SAY YOU, CAPTAIN?

I LIKE IT NOT, PRINCE--

MITRA PRESERVE US!

YYYAAAAIIIII

HOW MANY--?!

WE'LL COUNT THEM WHEN THEY'VE LICKED THE *DIRT* SOLDIER.

WHAT DARK DEMONS ARE YOU--?

HAI!

ANSWER ME, BLAST YOU.

CLANG

CLANG

MY PRINCE, THEY ARE SLAUGHTERING US!

PERDITION DAMN YOU OVER-BOLD MONSTERS!

MITRA'S NAME, LYSIAS, THEY DROOL LIKE FEVERED DOGS!

NO!

GLAARGH!

NEVER!

YOU'LL NOT *DRENCH* THIS SOIL FURTHER WITH *OUR* BLOOD, SAVAGES!

ROUT THEM, AQUILONIANS! YOUR PRINCE COM--

--MANDS--

NO!

THUNK

THEN ALL'S LOST

GRIEVOUSLY HAVE I FAILED MY LAND AND LIEGE

YET STILL SHALL LYSIAS REDEEM HIS HONOR--

WITH COLD STEEL

FOR CONN AND AGU CON A- OOPH!-

HO! THE BUZZARDS WILL BANQUET THIS NOON

NOW LETS BE OFF

THE PRINCE'S SIGNET RING--

--WILL EARN US OUR REWARD IN GOLD

LORD MITRA, GOT THE HORROR NO NOT NOT ALL SLAIN?!

NOT - THE KING'S SON

OHHH

THE COURT WILL *DOUBT* FATE'S MOURNFUL TIDINGS UNLESS...

...I CARRY HOME YOUR BLOODIED CLOAK AND BLADE, MY PRINCE.

GOD ONLY GRANT ME STRENGTH TO REACH AQUILONIA.

SEVERAL EVENINGS LATER.

..THE PALACE OF *KING CONAN* IN *TARANTIA*, THE ROYAL CAPITAL..

HA HA HA HA

THEY SAY THERE'S ENOUGH WINE FLOWING AT KING CONAN'S FEASTS TO FILL THE VILAYET SEA...

...HIC!--'TIS NO EXAGGERATION.

AYE, BARON ... THE WEATHER IN CLOUDLESS POITAIN IS DOUBTLESS MORE TEMPERATE THAN THESE FICKLE SEASONS WE HAVE IN TARANTIA...

THIS CIVILIZED BANTER DEADENS ME TROCERO, I NEED MY WIFE.

CROM! ZENOBIA'S HANDMAIDENS MUST BRUSH THE QUEENS RINGLETS ONE BY ONE--

WHY THANK YOU

HOLD, BOY!

HOW UNCOUTH

MANNERS, MY LORD, MANNERS.

HA! NDEED YOU NEED THE QUEEN TO REM ND YOU OF YOUR REGAL STATION.

TO OUR *ROYAL HOSTS* MAY *MITRA* EVER SHINE UPON THEM!

ZENOBIA--?

KING CONAN--

WHO ARE YOU MAN, TO COME--?

I AM A SOLDIER SIR WHO ESCORTED THE PRINCE TO GUNDERLAND.

NOW I ESCORT BUT H S ROBE AND BLADE...

YOUR HIGH-NESS--

Stan Lee PRESENTS:

CONAN KING

THE PRINCE IS DEAD!

IT CANNOT BE!

PRINCE CONN!

ARE YOU DAFT, FELLOW?

COUNT TROCERO...THEY CAME OUT OF A CLOUD OF BLACKNESS.. GOD KNOWS WHO THEY WERE...LIKE WOLVES...

.. SOMEWHERE IN THE GLOOMY FORESTS... I KNOW NOT WHERE... FEW MEN KNOW THE PATHS OF THOSE UNTAMED WOODS--

DOES HE SPEAK TRUE--?

THE PRINCE!

DEAD?

SILENCE, RABBLE!

ON WHOM SHALL I WREAK MY VENGEANCE?!!

--AND ROAST THEM IN HELLFIRE!

NO. I'LL FIND THE SCUM WHO DARED--

CRAASH

THE KING'S BERSERK!

SKRIED!

HAI! I'LL CHOP THEM TO BLOODY MESSES!

MY FIRST-BORN--

YOU MUST BECALM YOURSELF, MY LIEGE--

AWAY FROM ME, DOGS! WHO EVER KNEW SUCH GRIEF AS THIS?!

IS IT TRUE--

WHAT--?

'TIS THE QUEEN!

IS IT TRUE?

AYE, WIFE. CROM HAS STRIPPED US OF OUR FIRST-BORN.

MITRA GUARD HIS GENTLE SOUL--

THE NIGHT WEARS ON--

--WHILE KING AND QUEEN ARE LOST EACH IN A TIMELESS, PRIVATE REALM OF MOURNING AND MEMORY...

CONAN RECALLS HOW, AFTER HE HAD BEEN KING FOR SEVERAL YEARS...

--A BAND OF OUTLANDERS LED BY KING TARASCUS OF NEMEDIA, CONSPIRED AGAINST HIS RULE.

AYE, A DEVIOUS PLOT BORN OF BLACK MAGIC AND BITTER ENMITY--

--LANDED HIM PRISONER IN THE DUNGEONS OF NEMEDIA'S PALACE.

ZENOBIA, OF PETTY NOBILITY BUT CONCUBINE THEN IN TARASCUS'S HAREM, KNEW CONAN FROM AFAR AND WORSHIPED THE MAN WHO WAS LEGEND IN HIS AGE

BUT THE ROMANTIC GIRL WAS ALSO A WOMAN OF WILL AND NERVE--RISKING HER LIFE TO VISIT CONAN WITH THE DUNGEON KEYS AND A BLADE HE QUICKLY MADE GOOD HIS

AND SOON AFTERWARD RETURNED TO MAKE GOOD A PROMISE AS WELL—

--FOR HE HAD SWORN TO FREE ZENOBIA AND MAKE HER HIS QUEEN.

HIS QUEEN, AYE...

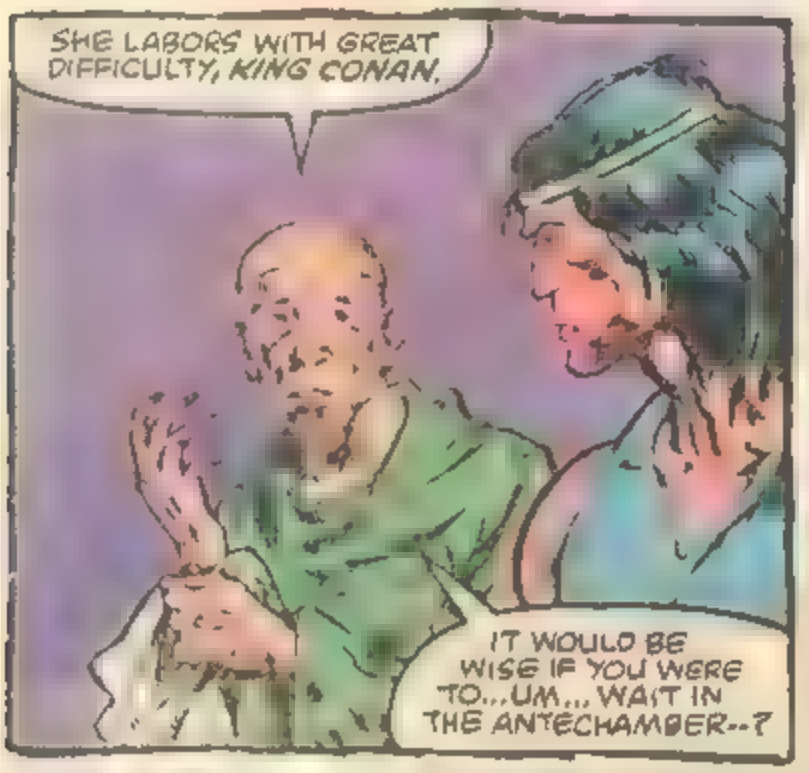
HIS WEDDED WIFE...

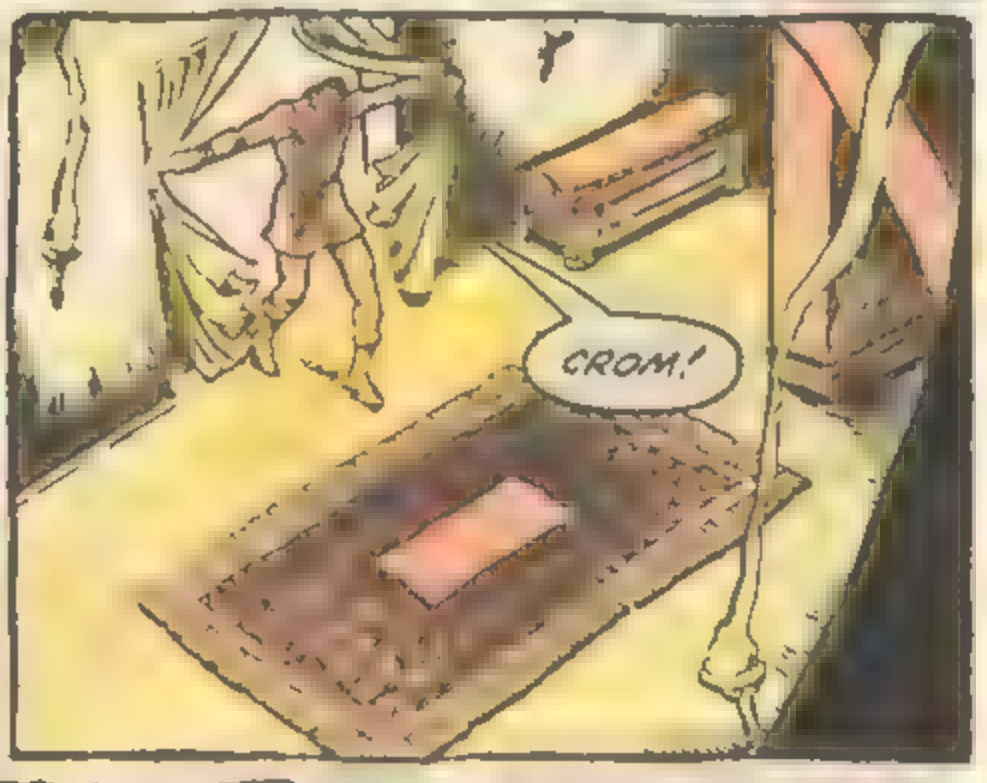
AND MOTHER OF HIS FIRST TRUE HEIR...

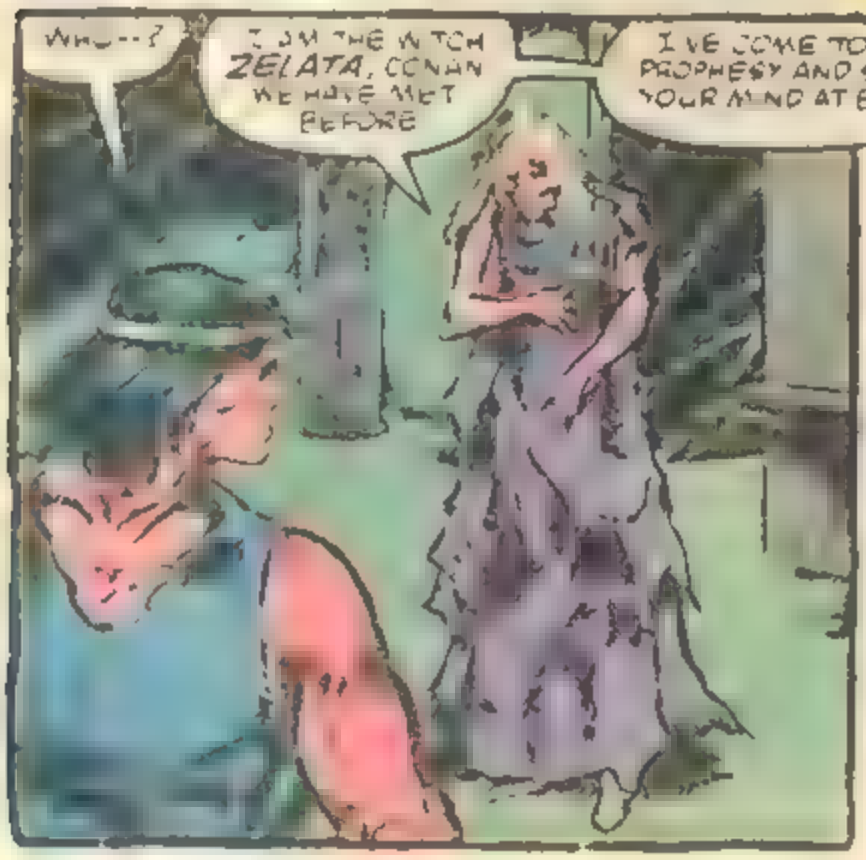
...CONN.

IT WAS
NINE BEARS?

--HAS IT REALLY BEEN SIXTEEN YEARS?
WELL, PHYSICIAN, WHAT AILS THE QUEEN?


SHE LABORS WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY, KING CONAN.
IT WOULD BE WISE IF YOU WERE TO...UM... WAIT IN THE ANTECHAMBER--?


CROM!


WHO--?
I AM THE WITCH ZELATA, CONAN WE HAVE MET BEFORE
I'VE COME TO PROPHESY AND SET YOUR MIND AT EASE

KNOW THEN, CONAN A MAN SHALL SERVE THE TRAITOR'S CLEARTH AND THE KING SHALL HAVE A SON—
--AYE, A PRINCE DESTINED TO BE HIS FATHER'S LESSER EQUAL, AND GREATER.

WOULD THAT YOUR WORDS WERE CROM'S WILL--
--FOR MY QUEEN SUFFERS GREATLY, AND THE PHYSICIAN FEARS FOR HER LIFE.

YOUR HIGHNESS--

EH?

A SON, MY LIEGE.

AND THE QUEEN--?

WILL LIVE, KING CONAN MOTHER AND CHILD WILL LIVE.

HIS NAME WILL BE CONAN, LIKE HIS FATHER'S.

AYE AND THE THRONE OF AQUILONIA WILL BE YOURS ONE DAY, LITTLE CONN.

CONAN...

THE WITCH ZELATA DID NOT PROPHESY OUR PRINCE'S *DEATH*--

NEITHER WITCH NOR SOOTH-SAYER KNOWS EVERYTHING THAT WILL BE UNDER CROM'S SUN

BUT, COME, YOU MUST REST NOW

CONAN, PROMISE ME YOU'LL NOT LEAVE THE PALACE TO JOIN THE SEARCH FOR CONN'S... BODY.

THE MEN YOU'VE ALREADY DISPATCHED ARE SUFFICIENT TO THE TASK.

LEAVE SUCH MATTERS TO *ME*, WIFE.

CONAN, *PLEASE*--

COME, COME, THE PHYSICIAN SAID A DRAFT OF THIS POTION WOULD HELP YOU TO SLEEP OFF A THOUSAND SORROWS.

BUT WILL *YOU* NOT REST?

MY TEMPLES THROB, AND I WOULD WALK THE PALACE TO SOOTHE THEM.

I WILL RETURN.

AT THAT MOMENT IN THE KING'S LIBRARY

NONE DISPUTE THAT THE ROYAL COUPLE ARE ENTITLED TO A PROPER PERIOD OF MOURNING.

STILL PRESSING AFFAIRS OF STATE CANNOT GRIND TO A HALT FOR THEIR GRIEF

YOU SPEAK COMMON SENSE COUNCILOR PUBLIUS

WHY, THE KING'S OUTBURST AT THIS EVENING'S BANQUET HAS ALREADY GIVEN BIRTH TO RUMORS THAT FLY THROUGH THE CITY AND ACROSS THE LAND WHISPERING OF MADNESS AND INSTABILITY

WHAT SAY YOU PROSPERO?

AYE, PROSPERO, THE THRONE OF AQUILONIA WILL ROCK LIKE A CARRACK IN A TEMPEST AT SEA IF THE CITIZENS GROW TO DISTRUST THEIR MONARCH.

WE HAVE, ON OCCASION IN THE PAST, RULED AS REGENTS IN CONAN'S NAME, THUS *IN HIS NAME* WE MUST CARRY ON SO THAT AQUILONIA MIGHT WEATHER THIS TRAGIC STORM

PROSPERO WILL OVERSEE THE MILITARY ALERT. PUBLIUS, YOU'LL KEEP THE PALACE STAFF TO ITS APPOINTED ROUNDS

I'VE ALREADY SUMMONED THE COUNCIL OF BARONS FIRST THING IN THE MORNING

SO! YOU DO PLAN HOW TO PROP UP THE KINGDOM WHILE CONAN LANGUISHES IN GRIEF!!

NAY, I'VE ALREADY SET MY MIND TO IT-- HAVE THIS GOLDEN TRINKET.

I'LL BE KING NO MORE!

TAK

IT WAS BUT A TRICK OF FATE THAT LED ME UP FROM THE PIT OF BARBARISM TO CIVILIZATION'S THRONE..

.. AND I EMBRACED IT AS NO MORE THAN ANOTHER GRIM ADVENTURE ON THE BLOODY ROAD OF LIFE--

-BUT LOOK TO WHAT GRIEF I AM BROUGHT!

ABJURE THE KINGSHIP?! YOUR MAJESTY SPEAKS FROM THE HEART, NOT THE HEAD, I FEAR.

NAY, NAY, PUBLIUS. YOU'LL SEE.

AH, HERE THEY ARE, THE ANNALS OF NUMEDIDES.

THIS VOLUME CHRONICLES THE LAST YEAR OF THAT PIG'S REIGN.

--AYE, THOSE BLACK DAYS, TWENTY YEARS GONE, BEFORE I TORE THE CROWN FROM HIS SWOLLEN TEMPLES.

SEE HERE --'OF CONAN THE GENERAL, WHO SERVED UNDER NUMEDIDES, KING OF AQUILONIA...'

BUT MY BROW ACHES! READ TO ME, PUBLIUS.

READ TO ME, I SAY!

UM... IF YOU INSIST, SIRE

'OF CONAN, THE GENERAL, WHO SERVED UNDER NUMEDIDES KING OF AQUILONIA, A LITTLE MORE NEED BE RECORDED

' FOR IT WAS IN THIS YEAR THAT THE KING WAS SUMMONED TO A HASTY MEETING BY SEVERAL OF HIS GENERALS'.

SO YOU SEE, MY LIEGE NUMEDIDES, THIS CONAN IS NO MORE THAN A WANDERING BARBARIAN-- AN OUTLANDER OF CIMMERIA, A MERCENARY AND THIEF

HE IS NO MORE FIT TO LEAD YOUR LEGIONS THAN THE MOST BASE-BORN OF GALLEY SLAVES.

NOR IS HE TO BE TRUSTED, YOUR EMINENCE.

WHEN THE WINE FLOWS FREELY IN THE KNIGHT'S HEAD INN, HE BOASTS HOW HE WILL USURP THE THRONE AND MELT THE STATUES OF YOUR HIGHNESS TO A PUDDLE OF GOLD

SUMMON H.M TO THE CAPITAL MY LORD UNDER PRETENSE OF AN OFFICIAL TRIUMPH FOR HIS VICTORIES THEN...

"AND SOON ..

IT SEEMS ALL OF TARANTIA COMES OUT TO CHEER YOU, GENERAL.

I'LL NOT DENY MY SHARE OF HONOR IN THE BATTLE OF VELITRIUM, KING.

THEN

HOW DO YOU LIKE OUR *BANQUET* FELLOW?

I LIKE IT WELL, SIR I'VE NOT HAD SUCH STOUT WINE IN AN AUROCH'S AGE! HA!

" SHORTLY,

THE DRUGGED WINE'S ADDLED THE DOG'S SENSES NOW HURRY!

"GENERAL CONAN WAS CARRIED TO THE GRIM IRON TOWER...

"WHERE...

THE PRISONER IS CONDEMNED TO THE HEADSMAN'S AXE ON THE SEVENTH SUNRISE HENCE.

"ENOUGH PUBLIUS--"

--MAYHAP IT WOULD HAVE SERVED BEST TO END MY LIFE BACK THEN SPITTING IN DEATH'S FACE.

FOR NOW I AM ROBBED OF MY SON, A FATE FAR WORSE--

NAY, CONAN! WE SMUGGLED YOU FROM THE IRON TOWER BECAUSE YOU WERE A NOBLE SPIRIT

NEVER WOULD WE HAVE LET YOU KICK INTO DEATH'S ARMS

"I CANNOT RECALL..."

FROM S GULLET! UNMANACLE ME YOU LEERING MUSKRAT AND I'LL STUFF THESE CHAINS DOWN YOUR FAT GUT!

HAR HAR

T'LL LEARN YER MANNERS SOON YE CAN LICK YER GRUEL FROM THE COLD STONES LIKE A HUNGRY DOG!

SPLAT!

BUT THEN WE WON'T NEED TA BE WASTIN' ANYMORE SLOP ON THE LIKES O'YE COME TOMORROW WHEN YER HEAD FALLS--CHUP! HAR HAR!

WHILE AT THE FOOT OF THE TOWER

NAME O' MITRA RAISE THE 'CULLIS!

AN HONEST MAN H AIN'T GOT ALL THE DAY

WHAT DO YOU WANT, DOG?

I WANT NOTHIN' BUT A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP FN T PLEASE M'TRA

IT'S YE IF YE'D FEED YER HORSES WHO WILL BE ACCEPT'N YER SHIPMENT O' HAY

AYE AYE, GO ON IN WE'RE DUE A CARTLOAD

WHAT IN—?

OOPH!

WITH WINE IN ME CUPS AN' A WENCH ON ME KNEE

BY CHTARS GIROLE, WHO—?

CONAN

CROM, I'VE NOT BEEN THIS CHAFED SINCE THE HYPERBOREAN SLAVERS CUFFED ME N'EON WHEN I WAS A LAD OF SEVENTEEN WINTERS

WE'LL HAVE YOU FREED HIM?

THEN

THERE! THAT DRIVERLESS WAGON OUGHT TO LEAD THE KING'S GUARD A MERRY CHASE

AYE NOW CROM KNOWS I'D SEE WHAT FRIENDS HIDE BENEATH THOSE MASKS--

COUNT TROCERO! PROSPERO.

AYE, CONAN WE BUT AWAIT THE OPPORTUNE MOMENT TO RAISE THE STANDARD OF REVOLT AGAINST THE TYRANT NUMEDIDES

YOU MUST FLEE THOUGH OR YOUR TOUGH HIDE WON'T BE WORTH AN AQUILON AN COPPER

"WE RISKED OUR LIVES FOR YOU THEN, CONAN FOR YOUR INDOMITABLE SPIRIT

"NOT EVEN KNOWING HOW SOON WE WOULD SEEK YOU OUT TO REJOIN US--

--AS OUR LEADER

AYE, YOU FOUND ME SOON ENOUGH--

--AFTER I HAD FLED THROUGH BOSSONIA AND SWAM THE THUNDER RIVER TO THE PICTISH WILDERNESS

INDEED, IT TOOK THE WIZARD DEXITHEUS'S CUNNING TO SPY YOU OUT.

BUT ALL AGREED THAT CONAN WAS THE ONLY MAN TO HARNESS AND DRIVE THE FORCES OF CIVIL WAR AGAINST NUMEDIDES.

HA! I'LL NOT FORGET THE DAY! I CLAMBERED THE PALACE STEPS..

AND CONFRONTED THE ONE-EYED DESPOT AT HIS PLEASURES!

AYE, NUMEDIDES, CONAN!

NO, P-PLEASE--

YOU CAN HAVE MY ROBES-- MY CROWN--

ONLY SPARE ME, AND I'LL GIVE YOU--

DON'T KILL ME-- GLAARGN!

DO YOU THINK I'D DIRTY MY HANDS WITH YOUR FOUL DOG'S BLOOD?

NAY, I'LL FIND CORD TO LEASH YOU, MISBEGOTTEN CUR!

DIE, BARBARIAN!

YOU QUINCE-FACED INGRATE!

KRAK

THUD!

"NAY TROCERO I'LL NOT FORGET THAT CAY."

ENOUGH OF MEMORIES AND CHRONICLES, CONAN.

AS WE CAME ONCE BEFORE, WE COME TO YOU NOW-- YOU *MUST* LEAD US AND REMAIN OUR KING.

THE LAND *DEPENDS* ON IT.

IF YOU WAVER, THERE ARE CONSPIRATORS THROUGHOUT HYBORIA'S REALMS WHO WILL DESCEND UPON US LIKE WOLVES.

LET THEM!

'TWOULD BE THE GRAVEST OF DISHONORS TO PRINCE CONN'S MEMORY TO ABDICATE THE THRONE, MY LORD.

HOW I WOULD RID MYSELF OF THE BURDENS OF STATE, THE FALSE CIVILITIES AND RESTRAINTS!

BUT...FOR THE NONCE -- AYE, THE MEMORY OF CONN WOULD BEST BE SERVED AS YOU SAY, PUBLIUS.

AND NOW, BY CROM'S IRON SINEW, *CONAN THE KING* SHALL SEEK HIS SON'S FOUL MURDERERS' IF THE JOURNEY NEED BE TO THE BROILING PITS OF HELL.

IT IS SEVERAL DAYS LATER, IN A THICKLY WOODED FOREST OF THE BORDER KINGDOM NORTHEAST OF SUNDERLAND THAT GRAY WOLVES TRACK A BLOODY AND BEDRAGGLED FIGURE WHO HAS SURVIVED A HOST OF ASSASSINS.

"THE PRINCE IS DEAD."

LONG LIVE THE PRINCE.

KING CONAN

℅ MARVEL COMICS GROUP
387 Park Avenue South
New York, New York 10016

JIM OWSLEY
EDITOR

Fellow Hyborians,

KING CONAN #18: superb artwork, tremendously detailed. Story excellent. KING CONAN #18 was one of a kind. I can't wait 'till issue #20.

By the way, have you ever thought of giving Conn his own comic? Think about it!

Greg Polling
Phoenix, AZ

Would you settle for a Conn mini-series, Greg? That's what we've got for you, beginning next issue when CONAN: SON OF THE BARBARIAN KING premiers as a second feature in CONAN THE KING. Six issues. Conn solo. Be here.

Dear Barbarians and Aquilonians alike:

I just finished reading "The Devil Of Darfar" and I think you outdid yourselves. Rudy Nebres' art was outstanding and the Zelenetz script was "like awesome"! I mean, the idea of Conan rescuing a carnival of freaks from their evil (boo hiss) master was a definite yes.

I am afraid I have to point out a few inconsistencies. First, our scoundrel in issue #18 swears by "Jhil" on several occasions. I wonder how this could be if Jhil is a Pictish diety as is told in Robert E. Howard's "Beyond the Black River". Second, while you may not agree with DeCamp & Carter in naming Ophir's capital "Ianthe", it cannot be called "Khorala"; that is the region in or near Vendhya whence came the "Star of Khorala".

Eddie Anderson
Winter Haven, FL

Alan (Mr. Know-It-All) Zelenetz responds: "You're certainly correct in pointing out the Pictish worship of the god Jhil, Eddie, but if you check out the paperback Conan The Adventurer, *page 142, you'll find that Jhil is recognized as a legitimate deity in several of the Black Kingdoms south of Stygia as well. Hence, Ibo Mala's exclamation, "By Jhil!"*

"As for Khorala being the capital of Ophir, my source on that was Lee Falconer's Gazeteer of the Hyborian World *(exerpted from SAVAGE SWORD several years back). To quote, "Khorala: place of origin for the famed jewel, Star of Khorala, stolen from the queen of Ophir. Hence Khorala is presumed to be the capital of Ophir." To this we editors can only add... what he said!*

ASSISTANT EDITOR'S MONTH

Just in case you've been in Guam for the last few months and haven't heard the news, we are now in a time warp affectionately known as Assistant Editor's month. Essentially, the editors are out of town, and their assistants are running the show. But, you may be asking, just what does an editor do, anyway? What what what?!?

An editor is the boss. The chief. The head honcho. The dreaded Big Cheese. The editor calls the shots. He (or she) is the one ultimately responsible for any given project's success or failure. The editor is the person who hires artists, writers, colorists, letterers, and even other editors to put together a given piece of work. The editor decides the editorial direction, or the "feel" of the project, and in general steers the course for the magazine and the characters presented within its pages. Every time an editor signs the release forms and sends a completed book to the printer, he's putting his professional reputation on the line. Every time an editor's book hits the stands it's sink or swim time. The readers are our ultimate judges, and they're a hard bunch to please.

So here we are with the editors all at a convention on the west coast, and the assistants running wild. Although I'm a man of many titles (including both full editor on CONAN THE KING and managing editor on SAVAGE SWORD: titles which denote various levels of responsibility), I am essentially an assistant, caught up in this bizarre turn of events. Even though I must admit to conjuring up some silliness of my own this month (including my review of Caesar's Commentaries on the Gaelic Wars in CONAN #154, and the first of the MARVEL RE-TREAD FUNNIES, featuring the treacherously re-worked version of the Death of Elektra from DAREDEVIL #181), I felt that in this landmark issue of CONAN THE KING, I'd take the theme of Assistant Editor's month just a bit further.

There's a guy here at Marvel who took a chance on a teenaged kid who had trouble sharpening pencils, and spent the next four years teaching him the ropes. This issue marks the fourth anniversary of the forming of what some Marvel insiders have called "The Team Supreme". This issue is also, to date, the single piece of work of which I am most proud.

That's why it seems most appropriate that, for Assistant Editor's Month, I respectfully dedicate this issue to Larry Hama, CONAN THE KING's Senior Editor, and my boss.

Jim Owsley
Boy Editor

THE PRINCE IS DEAD

ALAN ZELENETZ
script

MARC SILVESTRI
pencils

RICHARD PARKER
lettering

GEORGE ROUSSOS
coloring

MARIE SEVERIN
MIKE GUSTOVICH
DAVE SIMONS
CHARLES VESS
JOSEF RUBINSTEIN
JUDITH MARCOS
JACK ABEL
HARRY CANDELARIO
RON FONTES
MARC SILVESTRI
inkers

NED SONNTAG
inker, flashback sequences

MICHAEL W. KALUTA
cover

JIM NOVAK
logo

MARC SILVESTRI
corner symbol

DANNY CRESPI
production manager

VIRGINIA ROMITA
traffic manager

NANCY DODARO
typesetting

JIM OWSLEY
editor

LARRY HAMA
senior editor

JIM SHOOTER
editor-in-chief

NEXT: SHADOWS...

Bullpen Bulletins SPECIAL

Hi. My name is Danny Crespi. I am Marvel's **Art and Production Supervisor**, and you might have read my employee performance review in MARVEL AGE #7.

The Marvel editors are gone. They flew the coop, and left the rest of us behind. We're supposed to mind the store while they go off to California for fun and games.We've got to hold down the fort while they're lolling in the San Diego sun. The excuse for their windfall vacation is that there is an important comic book convention out west. *Ha! A likely story!*

Since the editor in chief Jim Shooter isn't here, I guess it's my job to write this month's *Bullpen Bulletin Special.* The last few *Specials* were interviews with such comic book notables as Vinnie Colletta, Bob Layton, and George Roussos.

Hmmm! I'm going to go that route. I'm going to interview someone who is truly interesting, witty, and can impart the wisdom of the ages. A man who's been working in the comic book industry almost since its very inception. I'm going to interview the world-famous comic book letterer and ace production artist... MORRIE KURAMOTO.

(Unfortunately, Morrie would only consent to this interview if I conducted it in his favorite Japanese restaurant. So, please ignore the clatter of dishware, and the pungent aroma of sushi...)

DANNY: *Oh, Ancient One, now that we are comfortably seated and have placed our lunch orders, I have a few questions to ask you. I have known you for over thirty years. How long have you been in the comic book business, and how do you keep yourself looking so young?*

MORRIE: I'll answer your first question, and reserve my answer to the second for later in the interview. In August of 1943, I came to New York to attend the Art Students League. I had just put in an eighteen month stint with the army, and had decided to move from my home state of California. I found myself a room in New York City for only seven dollars a week. I managed to survive with the money I received from the G.I. bill. After a while I became friendly with the reverend of a nearby church and he suggested I get in touch with one of his parishioners. He was a comic book letterer who later became a good friend of mine. His name was Irv Watanabe. Irv was very helpful. He taught me everything I had to learn to become a professional comic book letterer. Irv has helped many fellows in the field. After three months of constant practice, I got my first job...

DANNY: *Moe, was lettering what you really wanted to do?*

MORRIE: No. What I really wanted to study was fine arts. I was interested in painting, especially in water color, but I had to earn money to survive, so I took some freelance lettering.

DANNY: *How did you finally team up with Marvel?*

MORRIE: I was freelancing for many different comic book companies such as Hillman, Ace, Street and Smith, Fawcett, Fox and Timely. In those days there were lots of places to work for. A good letterer could be busy day and night. Of course, the price per page was not what it is now. One day, Artie Simek gave me a call and asked if I wanted a staff position at Timely Comics. At that time, they were located on the 64th floor of the Empire State Building. I grabbed the offer because my funds were running low. Unfortunately, the job only lasted a few months. That must have been in 1946. I continued to freelance, go to art school and work with my uncle as a gem polisher. In 1950, Timely called me again, and I started on staff all over again.

DANNY: *Who were some of the "Big Names" that you worked with at that time?*

MORRIE: Well, there were staff artists such as Carl Burgos, Bill Everett, Chris Rule, John Severin, Joe Maneely and Fred Kida...

DANNY: *That's a formidable list of names you've mentioned. Can you think of any others?*

MORRIE: Some of the letterers that come to mind are Ted Rosen, Herb Cooper, Stan Starkman, and you. Danny, you used to be so thin and svelte. What happened to you? You're so... so... you've become a fatty.

DANNY: *Listen, Kuramoto, I'm paying for this lunch, so I'll ask the questions. How long did this staff job last?*

MORRIE: It lasted until 1957, then we were all laid-off. Everytime things go bad or a lay-off is inevitable, the old battle cry goes up "Shades of '57." That reminds the old-timers that things are not as they should be. The lay-off was due to a breakdown in comic book distribution. In 1966, Timely comics, which had changed its name to Marvel Comics knocked at my door for the third time. I've been here at Marvel ever since, doing everything that goes into producing a comic book. It's alleged that I even taught Jim Shooter a thing or two about production – that was back when he was a kid. I guess that covers just about everything.

DANNY: *Hold on. I've got more questions to ask. What was Stan Lee like? How does working at Marvel now compare with years ago? What do you think of the different editors... of Shooter? I've got a million more questions to ask.*

MORRIE: If you want more answers, I think I'm entitled to another lunch. I think you've already got enough information to fill the *Bullpen Special.* What are you trying to do – run the comic book checklist off the bottom of the page?

DANNY: *Okay. Okay. But you did say you would answer the question "How you keep yourself looking so young".*

MORRIE: Simple. Carrot juice, spinach, grape juice, and, of course, sushi.

DANNY: *Hmm. Here's a napkin, wipe the soy sauce from your chin.*

Watch out this month, true-believers! There's no way we can pick out just one or two books as especially exciting. The assistant editors have been going crazy with their brief thirty days at the helm of Marvel, so all our comics are bound to be... well, unique this month. If you don't want to miss any unheralded magic, charm, or silliness, you'd better buy *all* our titles! How's that for unabashed hype?

THE HYPE BOX

CONAN THE KING #20 — The beginning of an entirely new storyline and a new dedication to greatness by ALAN ZELENETZ and penciler MARC SILVESTRI. How does news of the death of his son, Prince Conn, affect King Conan? He abdicates his throne! What next for the grief-striken king? If you've been following this title, you'll be in for a shock! If you haven't... what are you waiting for? This is the one not to miss!

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #248 — This issue features two stories. The first, by ROGER STERN, JOHN ROMITA JR. and BRETT BREEDING, features the pulse-pounding conclusion of Spidey's battle with Thunderball. The second one is "The Kid Who Collects Spider-Man," the Spider-Man story of the year. Roger Stern has waited years to pen this tale, and you'll never forget it! With art by RON FRENZ and TERRY AUSTIN.

THE MIGHTY MARVEL CHECKLIST

- ☐ **THE THING #7**
- ☐ **DAREDEVIL #202**
- ☐ **NEW MUTANTS #11**
- ☐ **DAZZLER #30**
- ☐ **CONAN THE KING #20**
- ☐ **RETURN OF THE JEDI #4 (Limited Series)**
- ☐ **MOON KNIGHT SPECIAL EDITION #3**
- ☐ **MARVEL RETREAD FUNNIES #1**
- ☐ **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #248**
- ☐ **CAPTAIN AMERICA #289**
- ☐ **THOR #339**
- ☐ **INDIANA JONES #13**
- ☐ **MOON KNIGHT #35**
- ☐ **MICRONAUTS #56**
- ☐ **CRYSTAR #5**
- ☐ **MAGIK (Illyana and Storm Limited Series) #2**
- ☐ **S.H.I.E.L.D. SPECIAL EDITION #2** – Second of two books reprinting **STERANKO'S** stunning S.H.I.E.L.D. stories
- ☐ **INCREDIBLE HULK #291**
- ☐ **AVENGERS #239**
- ☐ **CONAN THE BARBARIAN #154**
- ☐ **MARVEL TALES #159** — Reprinting **Amazing Spider-Man #21** by STAN LEE and STEVE DITKO. "Where Flies the Beetle!"
- ☐ **X-MEN #177**
- ☐ **ROM #50**
- ☐ **POWER MAN/IRON FIST #101**
- ☐ **G.I. JOE #19**
- ☐ **CLOAK & DAGGER #4 (Limited Series)**
- ☐ **ELEKTRA SAGA #1 (Limited Series)**
- ☐ **FANTASTIC FOUR #262**
- ☐ **MARVEL TEAM-UP #137** — **Aunt May** and **Franklin Richards**
- ☐ **IRON MAN #178**
- ☐ **PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #86**
- ☐ **DEFENDERS #127**
- ☐ **STAR WARS #79**
- ☐ **ALPHA FLIGHT #6**
- ☐ **JACK OF HEARTS #1 (Limited Series)**
- ☐ **X-MEN CLASSICS #1 (Limited Series)** – More classic reprints from ROY THOMAS and NEAL ADAMS.
- ☐ **MICRONAUTS SPECIAL EDITION #2 (Limited Edition)** – Re-presenting the original MANTLO/GOLDEN sagas.

MARVEL ANNUALS

- ☐ **AVENGERS ANNUAL #12** — Guest starring **the Inhumans.**
- ☐ **X-MEN ANNUAL #7**

MARVEL MAGAZINES

- ☐ **SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #95**
- ☐ **MARVEL AGE #10**
- ☐ **MARVEL FANFARE #12**

EPIC COMICS

- ☐ **EPIC ILLUSTRATED #21**
- ☐ **DREADSTAR #7**